

brass lip



raincoats
liggers

boison girl

kleenex

marymekon

ciu
pcir se

A MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

ON THE OPENING OF BRASS LIP

My Husband and I



Well, as My Husband and I were only saying to the Countess of Worford at the Hunt Meet last week, it's wonderful to be given the opportunity to entertain our young subjects all over the realm in colleges and universities, in addition to the other splendid civic halls in our United Kingdom, particularly as we are permitted to retain our royal robes and impedimenta.

On the musical side, I am supported by several of the younger scions from some of our better families, all suitably cloaked and sashed. The corgis can be a bit of a nuisance in the band van, but on the whole they are remarkably well behaved on stage.

The chaps in the band area terrific help and not at all sexist. They even let me carry the gear and don't assist especially, even if the amplifiers are quite heavy.

It could be difficult being the only woman in the band, were it not for the great respect the British hold for the monarchy. Besides, after singing Land of Hope and Glory for twenty minutes at the end of our performance, they are often in no fit condition to make unsuitable advances.

I do think that women are treated far more humanly in the musical profession than they are in routine day-to-day life. It seems ironic at a time when our nation has a female Monarch, a female Prime Minister and female members of the Stock Exchange that most women - despite their obvious superiority - see their role in life as housewives and mothers; but then, so often, this is thrust upon one. After all, I didn't choose to be Queen.



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SUZY VARTY

RAINCOATS

THE RAINCOATS are a four woman band. Gina, Vicki and Paloma play guitars, Gina plays violin on some songs, Palmolive is the drummer. They started in November '78 when Anna Paloma and Palmolive got together. All of them have been in other groups. Palmolive and Gina in all-women bands, the Slits and Jam Today respectively.

Connie: Do you think it's better paying with women ?

V: We find its worked better this way. Probably because we're all women. Probably, maybe

C: How does the audience treat you?

V: We've always played London, until we played Cheltenham and Birmingham tonight. The London audience is different, they're used to you.

C: You don't get 'get your knickers down' stuff ?

G: In Cheltenham we did. That was the first time we had that crap. I've had reactions like that when I was in another band.

V: Its always just a few individuals in the audience who want to make a spectacle.

C: Do you have difficulties with your manager ?

V: We don't have a manager, we look after ourselves. We arranged our single with Rough Trade. They'd helped us out a lot. Basically managed a lot of our affairs jointly with us.

C: Do you have jobs as well ?

G: We all do part-time things, we need the money - we don't make enough to live by any means

C: Why's that ? Don't you have enough performances ?

V: We get offered lots of work, but we feel choosy where we play we certainly don't want to play big places - we get offered support gigs in big places which we have not done. We've also turned down gigs outside of London up 'til now

P: Its not been viable to go a long way to play. we've only done 12 gigs before the tour, as we are now - we've only been together 7 months, it's a short time.

C: Where do you come from ?

Paloma's from Spain

C: Have you done any benefits ?

V: Not yet, no..... there haven't been many going. We were offered one for the Year of the Child, but that was while we were on tour, so we couldn't do it we'd do them depending

G: I'd personally do anything I thought was worth doing - woman's Aid ... N.A.C. (battered woman's defence organization and National Abortion Campaign) - I wouldn't do one for anything that was right-wing or anything I didn't agree with.

C: I'd be interested to know how you live, in households, with your parents or?

G: Anna Paloma and I live near Portobello in a pretty grotty accommodation. We're in squats. There's quite a community there, a lot of people playing music, a lot of activity.

V: I'm in a council flat.

C: How often do you rehearse ?

G: Before the tour almost solidly for two weeks....

V: I had a job, I had to give it up to be able to practise for the two weeks. we hired a studio for a week.... we usually practise in Gina's basement, which was very small, damp and difficult to practise in. we got about 5 new songs to get together over the period of two weeks before the tour.

C: What do you do during your spare time.?

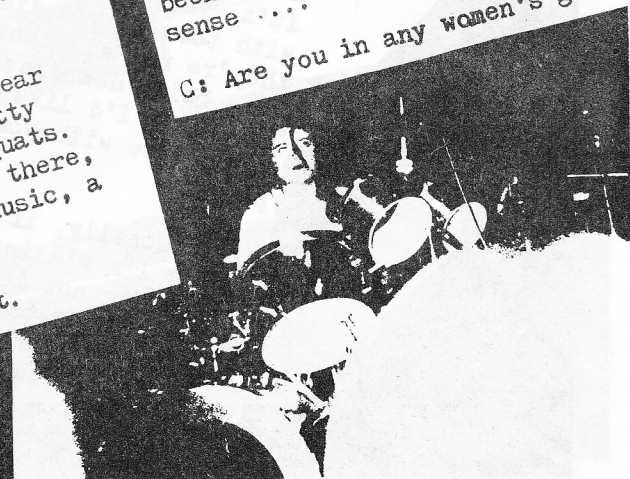
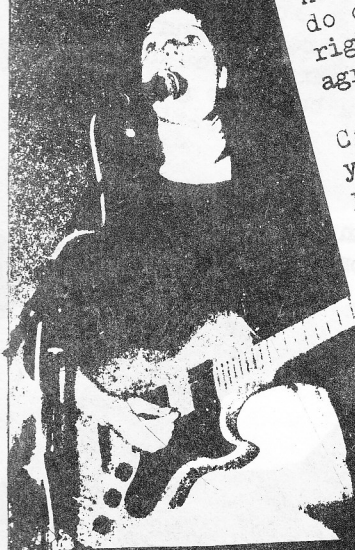
G: Anna and I were at the Art College until fairly recently and Vicki was at University. we continue those same interests - go to see films, exhibitions, the theatre, lots of music, gigs, listen to music, nothing extraordinary....

V: If you're involved in music, not just your own but other peoples as well, it doesn't leave you much time to do the things you did before. I haven't been to the cinema in ages, I used to go a lot.

C: Did you find it difficult to start ?

V: The situation was fairly ripe, people we knew, a lot were starting to play, so we started to play and just got involved in it. We've not had too many difficulties we've decided what we wanted to do and just tried to carry on doing it. we've been fairly lucky so far in that sense

C: Are you in any women's groups?



P: Personally, I'm not, Vicki's more involved in that sense. we did decide to go to a meeting of Rock Against Sexism because we were quite interested in the idea of joining forces with other women who are doing something. But we didn't agree with the beauty of the organization. I didn't feel keen on the name, Rock Against Sexism, for a start. I thought it should have a slightly different approach.

G: I don't think it should be on the same platform as Rock Against Racism, calling it Rock Against Sexism immediately aligns it. Why rock? Rock is such a male term already. And most of the people at the meeting were fairly anti-rock. They were all playing soul. Why 'rock against sexism' what does that mean? That doesn't make a lot of sense to me. As for the name..... that's something else. We feel the most positive thing we're doing is just doing it.

C: You feel your being on stage is enough to show.....

G: Not necessarily enough.

V: The way that you organize is very important. You can't just club a room together, stick a name on it, put a magazine out and think you're doing something. You have to think more carefully about the way you are going to approach it. I think they've (RAS) gone about it in lots of wrong ways, and they're not very open to suggestions. It's very difficult to work with them if you disagree, they're not all that concerned with being democratic, which is terrible. I'd like to do something else with women who are playing.

G: Personally, if it's interesting I'm willing to be part of it but I'm not into trying to get something together. Because I think what we do shows what our attitude to the problem is.

P: You can see we are against sexism, we don't use the things women usually use to push themselves into being accepted by an audience. People know that and maybe it makes them think about it. We come forward to them, in the way we do what we do, without having to be organized with anyone else.

C: How do you see your future life?

V: Well I can't see a very clear vision of what's going to happen. We want to keep out of the music business, as much as possible. We want to avoid as many of the normal channels as we can. Obviously, the more we play the more we get tied up with these things. Our problems are finding a way to carry on without getting too tied-up with all the things we dislike in the music business.

G: The more you do it, the more other people's expectations are forced on you about what you ought to be doing. You've got to be very strong to carry on doing how you want and not fall into it. We're lucky because we're with Rough Trade, a small company, but they've got more behind them than most small companies, so we don't have to go to a big company. The rationalization for going to a big company is usually that there's more money to make albums. We have no intention of going to a big company. It's just a question of doing what we are doing, in the way that we are, not succumbing to the pressures. Even doing a tour, you begin to get that pressure, it's very definitely there.

C: Have any of you been involved in the Women's Movement?

V: One of the reasons I didn't personally get involved in any women's movement - not that good a reason really - all the men I've known have been anti-sexist themselves. I've been through a certain education, certain channels, the men I've worked with have always been friends.

G: I've been in the women's movement for four years, going to meetings, in a discussion group. I played in a feminist band, Jam Today, which played just benefits, it wouldn't have anything to do with men, and nothing to do with commercial structures at all. I played in a band with one man and four women before I joined Jam Today, the man wrote all the music, did all the artwork, posters, made all the decisions, he did everything. We just did as we were told. That's very exceptional, that's not necessarily what happens when you play with men, that



was just him. He was a grossly sexist person.

C: Didn't you try to change this?

G: Yes, of course. Since he got the band together, wrote the music, the situation just arose like that, though we opposed it all the time. Anna and I wrote the music for the group we were in with men, two drummers and a guitarist. We were doing more composing even then.

C: Can we have your lyrics?

No. We don't want to publish them as they are. They stand better as part of the whole, with the music.



AU PAIRS

formed January 1979

Au Pairs make up:

- Les: vocals/guitar
- Paul: vocals/guitar
- Jane: bass
- Pete: drums

3 track single released
August 1979 - OTO 2.



playing with a different sex

flexi-set



LESLIE : I knew Paul and we were in a band together before which was disastrous and we needed a drummer, couldn't find a female drummer so Pete, who Paul knew, came round and we started jamming with him. I got Janes number off Martin (the Au Pairs manager) and just asked her if she wanted to come along.

JANE : I got a bass last summer, because I decided I wanted to play something. I just played it on my own, it wasn't very interesting playing on my own. When I went along to the rehearsal with the Au Pairs it was the first I'd ever played with anybody.

CONNIE : What type of notes did you use ?

JANE : At first I had to be told what to play. Paul would work out the chord sequences of the song and write them down for me. I just played the root note rather than playing fancy bits to start off with. As I've got to know how to play I do the bass lines myself. You pick it up as you go along.

CONNIE : Did you find it hard at first, in the beginning to play with the band ?

JANE : It was a bit nerve racking at first because I thought I had no musical knowledge, I don't know what I'm doing but Paul was a really good teacher, really patient and it's just a matter of picking up confidence, of getting on with it. I really enjoyed it, it was great playing with a band, I never thought I'd do it.

CONNIE : How do you feel about the audience

LESLIE : Well we get different types of audiences depending on the sort of gig. We played at a student teachers benefit gig in Walsall, it was a smart place. The audience was incredible, all about 25 I suppose, very straight people, straight student teachers.

You know what they're like, yeah snicker

Very conservative

There was a bloke walking around with a jock strap around his neck. He thought that was hilarious. I went up to him and said is that where you keep your genitals. Guys sitting around in groups talking about the 'latest bird'. That type of audience makes me angry, in a way it doesn't matter what they think, they obviously weren't into our type of music. That situation is quite good it makes you aggressive. We did that gig at Barbs and there was a lot of heavy punks, skinheads down at the front who could have been quite rowdy, the type who throw beer at bands. I wasn't worried when we went on,

we'd never handled that kind of audience before, but it was alright probably because we were all stoned.

I just kept smiling at them.

SYD : Could you see the audience then ?

LESLIE : Yeah, the first four rows.

JANE : It's always the really punky guys who come to the front, it's their sort of territory.

LESLIE : You can't infringe on that 'cause their all in their little gangs. Julie who roadies for us was down at the front, she always comes down to the front and dances. Even if no-one else dances she still

comes and dances. It's always nice to see her there. She nearly had a fight on one of these guys. They bashed into her continually, she said to this guy 'Fuck Off you keep bashing me'. He got really heavy with her and she was willing to have a go at him if it got physical.

SYD : You know about me getting rammed into the stage at that Mekons gig. Those guys were picking fights at the front.

JANE : There was all sorts of silly things going on there, there were people on the balcony chucking down lighted matches, cigarettes, glasses, they even threw somebody over.

LESLIE : When we played Barbarellas we hadn't had a lot of stage experience and Barbarellas was a big gig after playing the Fighting Cocks when there's a hell of a lot of people you know in the audience. I just smiled at them all

JANE : Yeah that's the way to do it. If they don't like you after all

LESLIE : These guys were heavy, they were good, they were dancing Making noises, shouting things up trying to distract - 'Oy over, over here!' - one tried to get up on the stage. Oh, it was funny. But I just kept smiling at them every time I thought they were gonna throw a beer at me.

CONNIE : Did you ever get any insults?

LESLIE : I suppose they do but you don't really notice it.

JANE : No I've not, not anything that would really upset you.

CONNIE : Not get your knickers down or anything like that?

LESLIE : When Pattie Smith was at the Odeon she rolled around on the floor as part of her act and her T-shirt came up accidentally. And all the guys in the crowd went way-way Owww. We don't get any of that

SYD : I suppose it's the gigs you play, the audience you get.

LESLIE : Yes and how you set out to treat that audience. How you move around on stage. Like Debbie Harry, she doesn't move around on stage in a sexual or provocative way but the way shes dressed.

SYD : Like a sex object, isn't she?

LESLIE : Yeah automatically I suppose, says she'll get that sort of reaction. The very first gig we did down at the Fighting Cocks, there were these guys coming up to us saying, "You're on to a good thing,



having two women in the band, you ought to move around a lot more, maybe wear high heels and black tights"

SYD : Just a member of the audience?

LESLIE : Some stupid bloke.

JANE : we get the odd sort of snidey comment but its not when we're on stage. This guy; who shall remain nameless, who plays bass in another Moseley band

said that he thought we had no musical ability altogether and we'd be better off working in a factory

JANE : I thought it was really funny actually.

LESLIE : He thought that was a really big put down. Me, Pete and Paul were at the Chinese take-away and he came in, I didn't know who he was and Pete says thats the guy who said that. So we stood there and said loudly how we must start working in that factory Monday morning.

And he sort of crept over into the corner.

CONNIE : what are you doing for your living

LESLIE : Oh, nothing, just signing on.

JANE : It is pretty time consuming. I

suppose its possible to do a full time job and be in a band. we rehearse quite a lot. And if you play a gig thats any distance away it means setting off early and getting back in the middle of the night. Its difficult to do a full time job.

LESLIE : And its also getting the publicity together for a gig. And the telephone calls Martin (their manager) does a lot of it. But its not just the practising and the gigs its other things as well.

SYD : Can you get kicked off the social?

JANE : It depends really, some have gotten away with it for quite a long time. We'd have to get jobs if they cut us off. It would be disasterous.

SYD : why are you in a band, for the fun, something to do, or ...?

JANE : I sometimes wonder!! I don't really know. I enjoy it a lot, its something I've always wanted to do.

LESLIE : The main reason is you want to do it. There's quite a lot of reasons, you can go into why you are the type of band you are as opposed to being a boppy social club band. Or why you're doing the type of music your doing.

SYD : And why are you doing the type of music you're doing ?

LESLIE : HMMM.

SYD : Did you decide to do the type of music you're doing because you liked it or just happen through constructing it?

LESLIE : Yeah, it happened to quite a large extent through constructing it. we had clear ideas about the sort of music we didn't want to do. That was unanimous.

CONNIE : Who writes the music.

LESLIE : The music just comes of getting down in the cellar

JANE : Someone has a basic idea and we work round it.

LESLIE : That basic idea can change alot, that takes up alot of time argueing. It gets very rowdy.

SYD : who writes the lyrics?

Leslie.

SYD : Had you written lyrics for songs before you joined the band?

LESLIE : Yeah, I had written words.

When we all got together for a jam we had to have something to jam around. So Paul and me had worked very roughly on a couple of things. And had a basic idea about the words. But its weird how we do the words, isn't it? Paul comes up riff and I go into the microphone and you get a line in your head, like that song "You - You're just a number." and you progress from there.

SYD : Are you going to be playing outside Birmingham ?

LESLIE : We've arranged an exchange gig with a band in Leeds, Delta Five, they

said they'd get us one in Leeds if we got them one in Birmingham.

SYD : Good idea that Do you have to pay for your own expenses?

JANE : You might get expenses, maybe to cover petrol costs only. Sometimes you have to pay yourself.

CONNIE : Do you have any political concept?

LESLIE : Yeah, I hope so. Doesn't it sound like it ?

SYD & CONNIE : Yeah.

LESLIE : But its very basic. Our songs are about everyday experiences which should come out of every experience. Theres no song that everybody in the audience couldn't relate to.

SYD : Are they from your own experience?

LESLIE : Oh yeah, but they're not personal. They're everybody's experience as well.

CONNIE : Your main subject is everyday life not a special subject like feminism ?

LESLIE : No. They are feminist songs, they are about issues that come into feminism. We do "Monogamy". The song "You" which is about prostitutes, about how they're kept on files, the hassles they get by the police, how they're thought of in society.

JANE : "Curb Crawler" - it speaks for itself.

SYD : Yeah thats everyday life in the Moseley scene!

JANE : The first song "Women's Prayer" deals with how women are handled by the media, the image of women put forward by '19' or 'Woman's Own'

JANE : I'd like to make a living from it, I wouldn't necessarily want to make loads and loads of money. I don't regard it as something thats permanent, the music business is dicey, you can't expect anything at all. Its very fickle. The music papers are fickle - build somebody up and then knock them down.

JANE & LESLIE : we don't make much money at all. Theres always new strings, drumsticks and things we need to buy.

JANE : It really bothers me that because of the equipment people can't hear the words sometime.

LESLIE : We're lucky we've got our own P.A. But we haven't got a monitor. Thats an advantage in being a support band in bigger venues, we can use the other bands P.A. when your a support band at a gig like that its a sort of code of practise that you give the guys who are roadieing thoses P.A.'s a tenner and if you don't they get heavy. The mixers whose P.A. it is can really fuck it up for you, you're the support band, they don't give a shit about you. when you go on they can

twiddle all the knobs to make it sound bad. which is why you give them a tenner so they won't do that. At the end of one gig this guy had Paul's amplifier and wouldn't give it back until he gave him the tenner. we only made £25 at that gig. As a support band you're vulnerable. Sometimes you don't get paid at all. Support bands will pay up to £3000 to get on tours with name bands.

JANE : we've been lucky, the bands we've supported have been really nice. Even the bands that support us now, relatively small time thing, I always make sure they get sound checks - don't treat them differently. So that if we got big, we wouldn't shit on people. Its just not right, theres no need for it. The bigger bands are threatened, they don't want you to have a

good sound in case you're better.

SYD : How much do you think people have a choice in the music they like?

LESLIE : The independent record labels have done a lot, given bands a chance to play their music, the facilities to bring out singles. Now bands don't have to sign up to the big record companies to be established.

JANE : If you can scrounge enough money together to bring out a single, you can do it.

LESLIE : Its a means of control that is working.

CONNIE : How does the band get on ?

LESLIE : we all get on well together. We're not like some bands who never see each other outside of rehearsal. we go to things together.

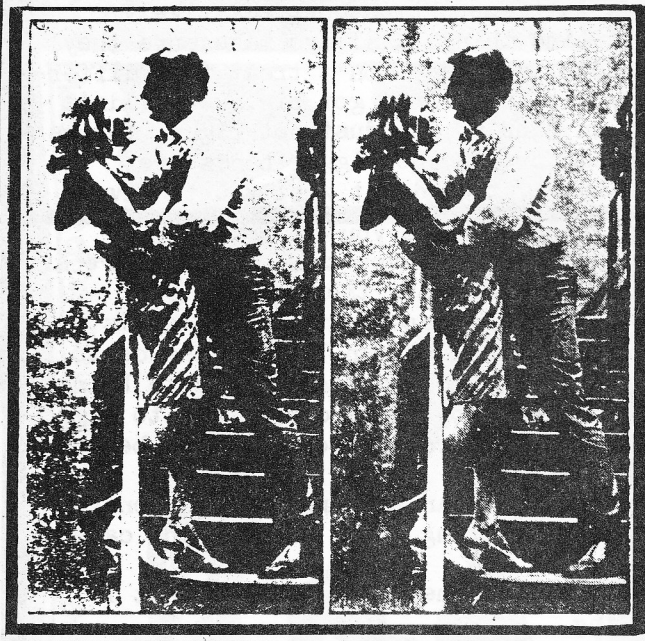
SYD : I think alot of bands now tend to be friends as well as making music together.

LESLIE : Yeah its nice. I've met some really stupid people they don't agree because you start getting fed up with each other spending so much time together. If I had an argument with Pete, say, about something not to do with the band, when we practise its all forgotten.

LESLIE : The women in the W.M. (which I do support) who come from that academic background have expressed concern to me that Paul and Pete are not sussed out on Marxist theory or whater.

which doesn't bother me at all, none of us are anyway. You don't need to have a degree to understand things. I do think there are very few ways for people to get into the W.M. I was in a conscious raising group, the women in it had been actively involved in the women's Movement and in political organizations, all were doing P.H.D's and M.A's on leftish feminist

things. I spoke to a couple of women who hadn't come from that background at all and they wanted to come to the consciousness raising group. I thought this was great. When I happened to mention it to one of these women already in the group she said she 'didn't think it would be a good idea to have her in the group' I got quite annoyed about it. I feel its really important that women, and men, should be able to move into those areas.



LESLIE : Like Julie, the woman they rejected. She's only 18, incredibly strong woman, she comes from a family thats broken up continually, her dad beat her up when she was young. Shes independent, she'll walk around here at at 5 in the morning and shes kerb crawled. And she'll carry a knife with her and is confident she can cope with it. Julie had a weird experience just a while ago, this guy was curbing crawling her, cruising very slowly beside her, he kept saying 'come on get in the car' She said Fuck off. He said 'I'll give you 3 quid, I know you could do with the money.' And she just continued saying 'why don't you fucking well just fuck off' The next thing she knew he drove up the pavement towards her, like he was gonna knock her down. He deliberately drove on the pavement at her.

CONNIE : But how could she have such a long conversation with him ?

LESLIE : well he just rolled down his window and followed her along slowly in the car.

JANE : Yeah, thats what they do.

AU PAIRS

Kerb Crawler

Verse 1

Mama always told me not to talk to strange men

If you don't you'll be alright

Me' 've grown up a lot since then

an' I still can't walk alone at night

Verse 2

He's outside ruling the night

Hiding behind the darkest corner

Picking on every woman in sight

He's known as the kerb crawler

Chorus

He's outside in his silver machine

Cruising along living his dreams

Hiding behind his window screen

Searching you out with his headlight beam

Verse 3

Sometimes a sign might send him away

But the risk, the risk is always there

He might be hunting for better games

But to him we're all one and the same

Repeat Chorus

Repeat Chorus.

copyright: Ideal Home Noise 1979.



you're one of those
who changed the game
you brought in new rules
which you obey
& coping coping
or nearly anyway

you mustn't do this
it may offend
you must give more
than you take away take away

but is it real ?
are you feeling it ?
you behave like a model
for others to follow
equal shares equal shares (aaah)

it's frustrating
aggravating
so annoying
pretend you're enjoying it

(do you like it like this ?
do you like it like this ?
do you like it like this ?)

it's your turn now
but do you want to
I don't know if you want to
it's inhibiting restricting
so confusing now I'm losing
count can't concentrate -
it's another way to fake

mustn't think about it
free and at ease
you're not selfish
you're trying hard to
please me please please me

(am I doing it right ?
am I doing it right ?)

yes thank you I got one
yes it was nice
yes we should go to sleep now
yes yes it was fine
we must we must
DO IT AGAIN SOMETIME
(we must ...) you wot ?
(we must ...) come again ?

I've got to go to work tomorrow
I'd like to but I've
got to get up early
it was nice yeah ...

COME AGAIN



- you wot ?
- come again ?
- you wot ?
- come again

KIKANEX



Connie - How did you get together with the other girls? Marlene - Together now
 fourteen month, met in Zurich by chance. Connie - How did you come to form a group and
 play music? Marlene - Klaudia and Lislot wanted to play in a group and were already
 watching out for people for some time. But we couldn't find the right people. A year
 later we started spontaneous to play regularly with two guitarists (not on stage).
 later we couldn't get on anymore. Then Klaudia met Marlene at a concert and we started
 to play together with Marlene. Connie - How long have you been playing before? Not at
 all Connie - That means that's your first band? Yes. Connie - How
 long have you been playing your instruments? Lislot - We started February '78
 learning our instruments. We played according to our feelings, we helped each other and
 with hands and feet and simple songs. Marlene - I have been playing saxophone before.
 I was the only one who ever played an instrument before we started. Connie - What do
 you do to make your living ? We don't make money playing in the band and



so we have to work. We take up temporary jobs, like office work. Two of us have part-time jobs. But now during our tour we get enough money to live on, during our life we are in Zurich we have to work and will have to find work when we are back. Connie -

Are you living together ? No Connie - Are you living in households ? Lislot and Klaudia - No , we live in ordinary apartment-stores. Regula is the only one who's still living at home, and we have each a flat.

In Zurich we use to invite people often and also visit other people, but everybody's got her own flat. It's like that because there are only a view places where we could go to. Connie - Do you often play gigs in Zurich ?

No we don't play very often in Zurich because the town is relatively small and we would have to compose always new songs to keep people interested. If they'd hear always the same songs they'd get fed up. Connie -

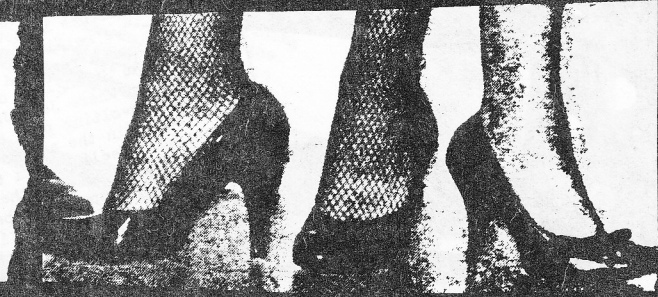
Have you been playing much in Switzerland ?

No, we haven't been playing so

much. Connie - What are you doing privately ?

Connie - What kind of difficulties do you have in the band ? Lislot - We only have the usual difficulties between ourselves. But we found it hard to get acceptance from the audience, who in the beginning approached us as little girls who were trying to get on stage with the help of some big brothers. Some shouted: get undressed or pull your trousers down. But now we rarely have these problems anymore.

KleeneX



rock has always been largely concerned with sex. Rock 'n roll was originally a synonym for sex and the music, the dancing plus the 'courting'; and the performers have always caused some sort of moral panic eg 'elvis the pelvis'. Sixties rock music brought about a form of sexual liberation in the sense that traditional sexual values were slackened. What I want to talk about is the way that sexuality in rock music is represented.

In general, music is controlled by men- male musicians/writers/technicians/engineers/producers/promoters- all these areas are predominantly male. Female creative roles are limited- men have decided what women should do according to their (ie men's of course) idea of female ability. So most women in the music business are singers- the images they have as performers are decided by men.

Having said that, I want to go on and talk about rock music which has always been the most male dominated form of popular music. Rock rock is a clear expression of male sexuality. The performers in bands like Kiss, Freddie Mercury, Robert Plant, Paul Rogers etc. etc. are traditionally aggressive, dominating, powerful, boastful. There's usually a focus on (hairy?) chests, (ugh!), genitals- use of guitars and mikes as phallic symbols.... of course all this macho posturing doesn't detract from their technical skills- not only are they wonderful looking males, they can also play their guitars, drumsets, in the 'proper' way, ie as designed. The lyrics are often horribly woman hating- they insult women and really make a big thing out of men as dominant, virile, strong and toughie they glorify male sexuality.

EG

1. "You'd better watch out baby, here comes your master" (J. Hendrix)
2. "Under my thumb, the girl who once had me down, Under my thumb, the girl who once pushed me around, Its down to me the difference in the clothes she wears, Its down to me the change that come. she's under my thumb Ain't it the truth babe."
3. "Black girls want to get fucked all night...." (Rolling stones)

In these lyrics women are seen as possessive, jealous, husband seeking- they should accept their fellas are gonna screw around- after all they've got so much to offer a woman, they can give her what she knows she really wants (heard this somewhere before?)

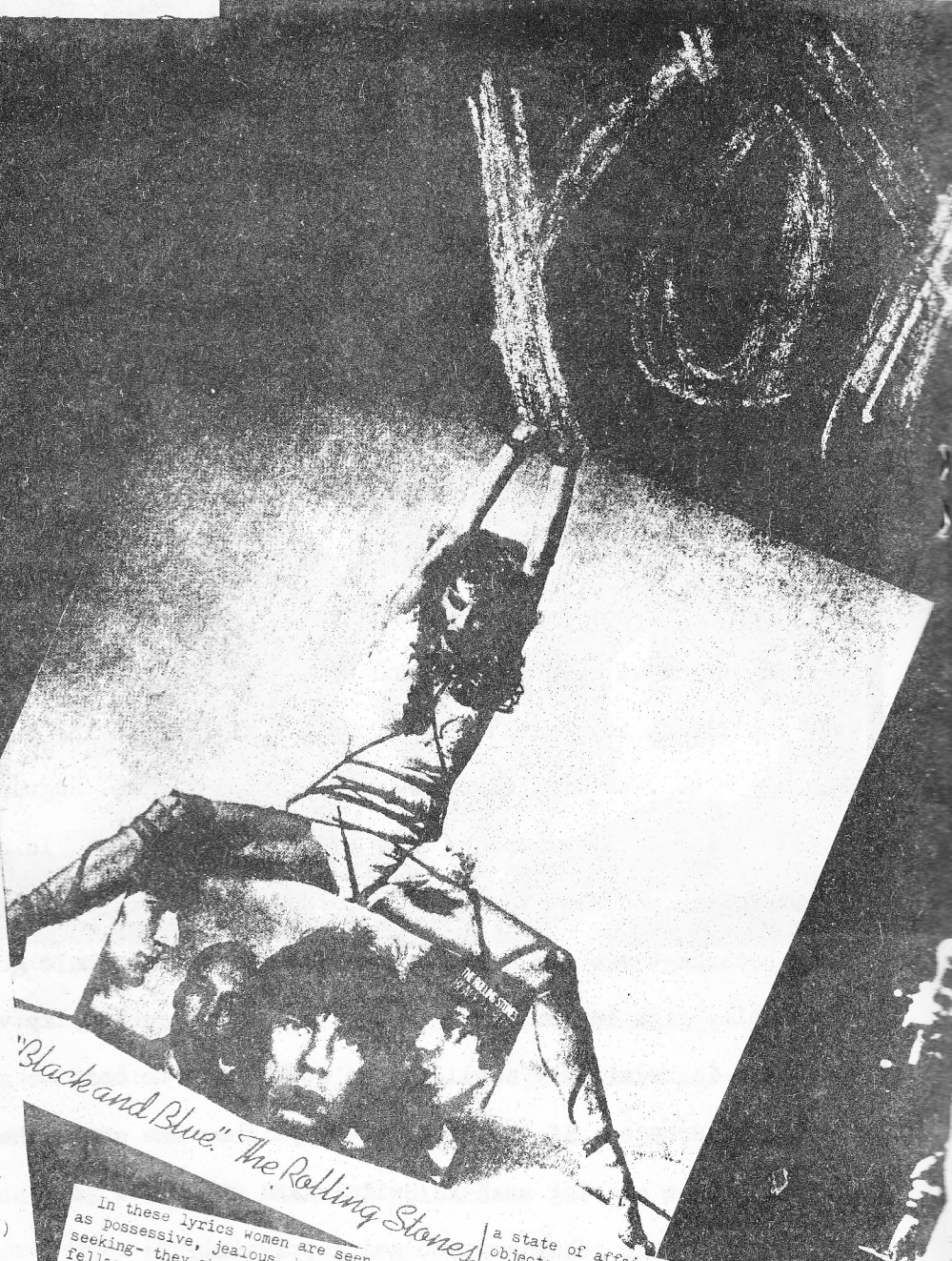
In fact it is quite interesting how rock does seem to acknowledge that women have sexual feelings, or at least tells them that they enjoy being dominated by tough, macho males, they really do like being beaten up and raped (have you seen the advertisements for Status Quo's, Kiss's and Scorpion's latest albums and God knows how many more revolting samples?)


It's also worth a mention how rock succeeds in establishing itself as a male culture in a world of lads together- "we're all stuns out to do them women a real big favour". I recall the Stranglers concert in Edinburgh where Jean Jacques Burnel (a revolting pig) suggested to the males in the audience that if they were feeling cold they should put their hands between the legs of the woman who happened to be sitting next to them. Not only was it a disgusting suggestion but it asserted

a state of affairs where women are objects to have things done to them; it inferred an exclusive male club where women are passive and get off on being treated like shit, they get off on being dominated. This type of thing happens regularly at concerts, in the adverts for bands and, of course, their songs. The female response to all this is a passive one, she should realize that her greatest pleasure and desire in life is to satisfy the sexual, emotional and romantic demands of these cock rockers, that is once she's been taught who's the boss- "what is it, Janice Joplin; the ultimate compliment that Gerry Garcia/Grateful Dead could pay to her was that 'Janis was just like one of the boys.' Lucky Janis!

There have always been women performers but as instrumentalists they are patronised and/or just jeered at by their far more skillful male counterparts. Or they can't play rock at all, after all they haven't a cock between their legs (and we have J.J. Burnel- Stranglers again--to thank for pointing that out to us) thank

"Black and Blue." The Rolling Stones





It's very easy to accuse a band of selling out but it's important not to get too idealistic-obviously there have to be compromises, but of a different kind. Music is an industry run for profit, and bands have to make a living. This does mean signing with big business for some bands, such as the Gang of Four on SMI but this isn't simply selling out. What it's important to recognise is that traditional rock music culture has been challenged and this has meant that women are more able to break into that area, and, more important challenge female stereotypes. eg Poly styrene, Siouxsie, the Raincoats, the Slits. But of course they're up against a lot- the music press for instance finds it difficult to accept this; eg "Poly looked plump in a staid middle-age suit" why the fuck didn't the reviewer listen to her singing? Vi Squad (Poison Girls) was recently described as a "bulky middle-aged woman forced into a red satin skirt!"

It's not just smart-ass music journalists who're not interested in the fact that you don't want to be a sex-object either- after all sex sells here too. It's the men in the audience-either patronising or just downright insulting-

And the women in the audience often feel threatened, seeing women on the stage as rivals as opposed to giving them support. There are numerous problems women in bands have to face: How should they behave on stage? At a recent Rock Against Sexism gig some women in the audience accused the women on stage of being sexist, because some men watching were getting off on it's making lewd remarks etc. There is a risk of getting too caught up- I think there is a big difference between being sexy and sexist. Being/looking sexy is an impression somebody gets from you-it's a personal thing-I find Iggy Pop sexy, he could be sexist I don't know, I've never talked to him. But I think he's sexy on stage not sexist. A certain sounds reviewer in a conversation with Pete and Jane (Au Pairs) accused me of looking provocative-a very peculiar adjective to use, not looking sexy but provocative implying that I wanted something done



to me? It's becoming very easy to accuse performers of being sexist without thinking clearly. Paul, our guitarist, has a couple of times been criticised for being macho on stage, because of the way he moves and handles his guitar. Well, he's a man, he's playing his guitar and he's moving to the music because he's enjoying it. So what's he supposed to do. stand still in the background? You have to be very careful about how you criticise it- Paul is very conscious of the problems, he constantly examines the way he behaves on stage and I find it difficult to accept alot of that criticism as thoughtful and valid. You could go on forever: should I wear make up on stage, should I jump about cos then my boobs bounce, should I in fact move at all? See how ridiculous it could get?

On the other hand you've got men in the audience and other bands who'll see you as a bunch of castrating/ radical/militant feminists-you've got no sense of humour, you hate sex. (Like Mary Whitehouse) This sounds reviewer (who seems to write every review with Chamber's 20th Century dictionary by his side) had a bit of a problem working us out "Are you a bunch of radical feminists?" he asked, "but I thought your singer looked provocative..." the point being you can't look 'provocative' and be a feminist (sorry, mate, I didn't mean to provoke you, how did you feel about that?) His criticism, as a man, being 'provocative', as being a big prick. Perhaps he meant 'sexy' which goes back to my point before- people find lots of things sexy, I don't find muscles and hairy chests sexy (some people may do) I don't wish to conform to some female sexy stereotype but I'm certainly not gonna go on stage in dungarees with no makeup or whatever Just to avoid the stupid comments of the likes of that reviewer- it's their problem, not mine.

Still, ever since the emergence of punk and independent record labels the number of women organisers/promoters/musicians is still small. Those bands, male and female, that are tackling the problems of sexuality and sexism are providing a means of getting away from the superstar image and they're also exploring different relationships between performer and audience

SYD. Your last record sold quite well, 27,500 pressed and most sold so far, how did it come to be known about?

MARY. The Mekons got quite a reputation off the first single, it being such a bum job, all gathered 'round one wrapped microphone in the kitchen. At first no-one would take the thing seriously because it wasn't in the thing seriously because it wasn't 'good' quality, it had mistakes, five don't touch it with parsons (New Musical months later) made it his single of the week. John Peel picked up on it, said 'really liked it. I've never will you give that!' 'Any Mekons out there will you after that?' 'His phone was jammed up after done two sessions for him John Peel did all for us, we've done sessions for him

SYD. You said that if you hadn't done something recently to promote the band then your audiences at gigs fell in number. They'd forget you.

MARY. Yes that's right - either a radio session, a new product or got in the music papers or something outrageous, you get more attention. 'Where were you' when it was released brought out a packed audience, as soon as they heard the number, jumping up and down.

SYD. Your the only female in an all male band, how does it work, does it matter?

MARY. Lots of girls are front-line girls, the selling point for the band. Which I'm not - I play bass guitar, I don't sing of the lyrics. I don't write all the lyrics in the band, I don't write a say in the music. Everyone has a say in the music - equal say, but I'm not technically with the lyrics, but I'm not technically good at stringing words together, Mary is, he refines the words.

SYD. You're about to sign with Sive, some people are critical of bands signing with big labels. Why are you signing?

MARY. We're £1,500 in debt, there's no way we're going to cover ourselves unless we get signed by a major. Otherwise we won't be able to gig etc., they'll give us money to cover at Leeds University. The band have been at Leeds University, most on the Fine Arts course. Three have finished to survive on. I'm working at a grant Boys Grammar School, a private school Leeds violin. They think I'm completely off my head. It's a good job because I

can rearrange my schedule to fit in with the band business. I have to give ten lessons per term to eleven kids. There is no alternative to signing, if we want to exist and carry on as a band. Otherwise each individual member is going to owe £100 * to the bank.

SYD. Don't you feel a bit bad about leaving 'Fast Records'?

MARY. No, not at all. Fast don't want to put out albums, bands that no-ones heard of before, they're not interested in established bands being on their label. I think it's good. Its not a split, which I think is good. (person who runs we've asked Bob Last (person who runs Fast) to come along when we stop dead until the new single. Our plans stop being signed. we know what's going on about being signed. we know what's going on about being signed.

SYD. How do you work out what places you'll play?

MARY. We used to leave it to Nick, to get the gigs, our manager, he'd lig people personally. Everyone has been approached by them start out. We were approached by Asguard, a booking agency in London, now they do that for us and take a per centage (I can't remember places like Newcastle, good, because places like they'd never high Tom got his nose donked, that, its too high have accepted a gig like everything and will pay a risk, they go into everyting and will pay make sure that gigs are safe and will pay

SYD. What booking conditions did you put on Asguard?

MARY. It was a niggling legal contract. Standard demands. There's not that many places a band like ours can play, of it.

SYD. Do you do benefits for free or do you charge?

MARY. We have to charge. The band has to charge because we have to pay for the P.A. which can cost up to £250. So we have to get paid. We do them to lose money on them. can't afford to lose money on them. used to do them for free.

SYD. You used to do a lot of Rock Against Racism gigs. Paul said he thought you were getting cagey about doing A.A.R. gigs now. Is that true?

MARY. A lot of bands do use A.A.R. its have used A.A.R. in a way. A lot of people one way to get heard. 'cause we charge in A.A.R. A.A.R. couldn't believe the Newcastle R.A.R. put theres things price we quoted a van, your own P.A., petrol. like hiring

That in itself is a lot of money, so you have to charge something like £200. People understand better now the problems because we've talked about it quite a bit, but they thought we were ripping them off, because we said we wouldn't go out for less than £200. You get to have a crap P.A., you can't afford to have a crap P.A., you're fucking your own sound up.

SUZIE. You're lifting yourselves up all the time?

MARY. It's inevitable unless you want to end up like 'here and now' just getting your own small circuit, you've got to get more integrated. Signing for 5 a.m. after have to drive back here for 5 a.m. good for an out of town gig. Which isn't good for a band, everyone gets so knackered. Signing will also mean better distribution of our records. Fast doesn't want to use capital, or rather doesn't want to be able to get into the charts, you need to sell so many in one week to chart. A small label can't do that, it's too much of a risk to print that many in case the record didn't sell.

SUZIE. Would your mind being on 'Top of the Pops'?

MARY. No, we definitely say 'yes' to T.O.P's.

SUZIE. Wouldn't you be afraid of losing credibility?

MARY. Yes, U.K. Subs have been criticized for going on T.O.P's. Selling out. But they're in the same position as us. You've got to do those sort of things. Like be on T.O.P's, it's just part of the paying system. I think if a good band is on T.O.P's it becomes a good programme.

SUZIE. I agree

SUZIE. Did you go to sire about signing or did they come to you?

MARY. Bob last and we (the Mekons) know the Rezillos, who are with Sire, and we made informal sort of connections that way.

SUZIE. How did you originally come to be in the band?

MARY. I lived in a house a few streets down, we were hiring out P.A. stuff down in the cellar. The Mekons got thrown out of the B.B.C. - they were making too much noise! So they came round one night for a jam, we were having a party at the same

time, they asked if I'd like to play. Ross, who is now in Delta 5, decided she didn't want to carry on, didn't want to spend a lot of time rehearsing, so they wanted some one else and just asked me to play. I couldn't really play bass, but neither could they play either!

SUZIE. We were talking last night about violence at gigs. Was it at Newcastle....?

MARY. Yeah, a A.A.K. gig, there was no back stage security, we were about to go on, were in a small dressing room, the fight started outside (in the main hall) between estate gangs. It started over something

daft like someone picking up one of the support band's guitar. The guy who's guitar it was said 'lay off, that's my guitar' and the other took offence at his objection and layed into him. So the fight came on stage, someone ran away from the fight into the dressing room and what followed was chaos, complete chaos was full loose - suddenly the dressing room, fire of 30 kids all chucking chairs, fire extinguishers, Tom got hit. Anyone could have got hit, it all happened so fast. That was unusual, that could happen because there was no security.

SUZIE. A lot of people associate you with communists, don't they?

MARY. The Mekons aren't communists.

SUZIE. Well, but, you said you were labelled a left-wing band.

MARY. We had a really funny interview with David McUllock (Sounds critic). All he kept saying is 'You're commies, you're commies.' We didn't get anywhere with the interview because he refused to stop calling us commies. I don't know where he got that. It's probably doing a lot of benefits, 'cause that's one of the only ways you can get gigs when you are an unknown band.

SUZIE. The first interview you did was with Tony Parsons with the Gang of Four, wasn't it?

SUZIE. What sort of things do they ask you in those interviews?

MARY. The last few interviews have been about when the Mekons first started, which has nothing to do with me, I joined have later. The beginnings of the Mekons first become almost mythical, the Mekon's first gig and someone coming up and saying 'would you like to make a record' in the kitchen! We started out not wanting to sign up, it was just a laugh really to start

with, not wanting photos, not wanting personalities in interviews. Like we'd decided beforehand we wouldn't allow pictures to be taken of us. But immediately you come up against what taking such a position means. Like the photographer has come along to take pictures, he won't get paid if you don't let him take pictures. And they wouldn't print an interview in the papers without pictures. And you can't get gigs if you don't let the managers of clubs, show him press cuttings etc.

SUZIE. The press must have a lot of power to make or break a band then.

MARY. Not that much, a good record will do that more. But, well, yeah, they have a lot. It's useful to show press to managers, you can't do it completely by word of mouth. Tapes of your music though can convince a manager to book you as well.

SUZIE. That carries over to how you seem to present yourselves on stage, is that intentional?

MARY. Yes it is intentional. Mainly and really definitely. I can't say 'we' because everyone in the Mekons has different ideas about everything. So when I say 'me', I mean tentatively us, or it means me personally. I always have to say that unless people misunderstand. Definitely, for me, it's the band coming across as a working unit, a working unit who's work is just a laugh, it's just fun to do.

SUZIE. They don't shout 'get your knickers down' - you were saying how this one guy didn't even know you were a girl!?

MARY. That happens a lot, they come up and say 'are you a lass?' Some of them are really serious, some of them are taking the piss and some of them are hostile because they know I'm not there with a bloke.

SUZIE. It upsets them that you don't look like a woman?

MARY. Yes! Oh Yes!

SUZIE. Well I mean you do look like a woman but according to their standards you don't look like a woman!

MARY. Yes, yes, some of them are really upset by it, they find it offensive. They find me offensive.

SUZIE. When I first saw you on stage it really impressed me. And I think that's powerful about it, is that. That shows how powerful it is that it upsets those people.

SUZIE. Yeah, yeah.

[illegible]

SUE. As soon as he read it. And I been
MAK. As soon as he read it. And I been
he had to act his male part. 'the business' -
the end of the music - 'heh, heh, heh, heh,
talking hes actually - heh, heh, heh, heh,
'cause radlie.

SYD. Oh yeah.

MARY. No! I mean the women's movement. As such, you mean? I went to Birmingham.

[illegible]

SUZIE. ...the boys
yesterday, in small groups
your friends in small groups
that's just what I think.
Cause it's true.

SUZIE. I got the big one about the big dubious involved in it. you get really dubious involved in it and I feel that it's been a really bad thing and I could

to a meet-
yeah right, I as-
yeah I knew Julie, she
NYTE. York

A

... went along
just so self-consistent
this was at university at York,
... a term at York,
... a term at York,
... a term at York,

in re-
what were f-
along with Simon D-
down on ta-
SUZIE.

SUZIE.
Simon's got to go there as
Martin (coat)

SYD. Didn't j... around
mucking this... a
city.

loads and I was asked
or sociology departm
mecht and

is rock solid. They're gonna
is revolutionary in. they're gonna
Chinese are involved in. they're gonna
Chinese are involved in. they're gonna

And now, tell me: tell you? tion about their like a past, the

MARI. ...re much ... the back page).
they're much ... the back page ... had to leave
back-page ... on the ...

SUZIE. wa- I left, they fed up with
university why I was fed up with

university so

Syd. Being night with you in-
last night said to musician for a
live and to musician for a

ref- "would, but - stone," we
voice I'm sorry Rolling it.
ater. With Rolling for it. here.

have to of Co
spec-
to of Co
have never said any one
he never

he just carried on himself. I was
he just to protect himself, I was

and Rock and I. Or
and become rare, be aware
its be must he said he care as

MARI. and this. This care. I.
aware, its not you can do about
O.K., tested, you can do about

there wasn't prepared to do rock would do a no,

SUZUKI. Racism, I want a brick at the
Against he didn't throwing with the

SYD. That's at his conce-
security at his conce-
said that, you said
said then, then
said then, then

don't the words
exactly ?!

like
paste
US.
And-when you see
sex & Drugs & Rock
and roll.

you as. I cause I serious.
like an attack
just laughed but he was in awed s

with the
supp
a bit emb
was a bit
interview
and ques
really

can be fun. MARY. I actually, total wet, your next

Yeah, his ya helped him
I think MARY.

"we liggers
who liggers
YEAH.
nurry asked me to tea
? ?

Q. Yeah, he said that
by D. implying that
ated.

you can go downstairs. Petty. It was funny he wanted me to go because I said hardly anything, you two were asking all the questions, I was just laughing all the time we were there, the whole scene hit me as incredibly hilarious.

MARY. All the blockheads are slick musicians

They're in it for the bread.

SUZIE. The bread, baby. Did you hear that

about a gig that led Zeppelin wanted them to do.

Pury said he was against it but if the band

wanted to do it he would.

MARY. That's verging on a democratic decision

But if you got people like that in a band

what's the use of democracy?

SUZIE. Right

to have a lot of good friends, friends you

can rely on. He was protected in a way. Did

you think that?

SUZIE. Yes I do. The reason I wanted to go

back stage was to see what it was like, I

didn't care whether or not I met the band

members personally. But they corridor and where

about an hour in the inner corridor, a

time. There was only thought 'gee, it must

waiting to get in, I but it wasn't crowded

at all.

SUZIE. They did that with the Clash as well

It was ridiculous. Two or three people let

in at a time. It was - 'Afore your heroes'

MARY. I wanted to talk to the band as well

though, because you don't really get a

chance to get your own opinions through the press

you only get impressions through the press

SUZIE. That has jangle was really

insulting to us.

SUZIE. Pure unadulterated abuse.

MARY. That German girl, his girlfriend,

was nice though, interesting to talk to.

From Munich. Punk is small in Germany but

its getting bigger.

SUZIE. The band knew nothing about the

modern music scene, and they didn't care

to know. They'd made it big.

MARY. Yes, Ian Dury in the press in

Germany is put over as Britain's punk!

They won't touch anyone there unless

they're really big, like Garat, money W,

James last. There's very few records. its

Germany has no alternative. Most English

hard for a band over there. Most out of

bands, maybe Munich, play two big places

Berlin.

and come home. If we went I'd like to play

small towns, get to know the place.

SUZIE. You've played in big venues which

bands are criticized for, actually I feel

critical of that as well. The atmosphere

is not good, distant, impersonal.

MARY. Its difficult when we first started

playing big places, we were useless, we

were better in small pubs. Andy and Mark

do a sort of chat show between how to

pliss around. You got to learn how to

project. If you can project, make it

personal, be friendly.

SUZIE. If you get big does it mean you can't

do small gigs?

MARY. Could in Germany. You could here but

you'd just to do several nights in

succession. That's the problem if loads of

people want to see you, you have to do almost

places; or its unfair. When the gang of

four played the Nashville there were to get

riots outside because people like

in.

SUZIE. If you ever became really big, like

Ian Dury, really famous, would you still

want to talk to the audience?

MARY. Oh Yeah. I'm not going to kick

people out of the dressing room because

they ask me about the price of our

records; I like to meet people are interested

I'm really chuffed. Sometimes I'm really

- have questions. Sometimes I like a girl.

passed off at the end of gigs when that are

come up, they will treat you like a girl.

Their not interested in the things that -

interesting - the price of records, that

much control you have, chat up. I don't

but just come up for a don't project girls

get of image. The boys have to handle girls

sort of crazy for them as well, just 'cause

going crazy for them as well, just 'cause

they're in a band.

SUZIE. Really!

MARY. It doesn't happen often, they have the

wrong image, they're not very good about

scoring. Ha ha! The Mekons are whimps.

MARY. I have no where to live at the moment.

SUZIE. Tell about those mags you read.

MARY.

FAIRY TALE IN A SUPERMARKET

rough trade

RAINCOATS

POISON GIRLS....E.P. with fatal microbes

small

wonder xntrix

E.P. HEX....small wonder xntrix

disco graphy

AU PAIRS...YOU...

021 records

KLEENEX YOU/U

HEIDI'S

HEAD

MEKONS

NEVER BEEN IN A RIOT....

fast products

WHERE WERE YOU fast products

WORK ALL WEEK....virgin

album out soon on virgin

Syd: You mean it's at
 level?
 Mi: It's become m
 conscious level.
 worked through
 and with other
 work conscien
 ingly openly
 and less ne
 feminist,
 revolution
 Just our
 even ha
 we're
 women
 eit
 S

Syd: What do you try to express through your music?

... of what we're doing is a real
... against the family. As a kid I
... with my family. It goes be
... during the war and ev
... life was tota
... ly. into

ability. I see the family very much as a way of isolating people from each other. It particularly cuts through to the time when I was left coping with two very lively children in isolation, especially from other women. That's where my attitude to the family comes from, reflection back to my own childhood and how in fact I personally feel a great need to change that. As I was saying about the Women's Movement, there are times in my life I've really needed the support of other women. I need it right now; you're talking to me in a way how male journalists wouldn't. So analysing that to the family as an institution is the root of all isolation and alienation of all our people. I try to say something quite new about something quite new. I try to say something quite new about something quite new. I try to say something quite new about something quite new.

...the group, you're female and they're male, what does it mean, how does it work?

...Right through from the Body Show time all those things were kinda clear. There's a struggle going on in some way but everybody in our group understands

Q: You mean it's all on the U.S. level?

A: It's become more and more on a conscious level. Richard and Lawrence have worked through a lot of this issue with me and with other women in their lives. We work conscientiously on it and increasingly less nervous. I'm not a separate feminist, I think I'm very radical, very revolutionary. I think we are as a group. Just our stance on the stage - we don't even have to open our mouth, because we're who we are. I'm a middle aged woman up there in what is traditionally either a dolly's role or a men's role.

Q: I found that really good. The age of us more than being a woman.

A: There are a lot of women in the may-bird image.

Syd: I found that really good. The age thing hit us more than being a woman because there are a lot of women in groups now; even women who don't feel they have to be that dolly-bird image or any variation on it.

The other thing about your question is that it works with the group better now. Because the age is inseparable from the group. Because as a woman you're placed in a different place than a man. You're not supposed to be a man's image or any variation on it.

found that really
hit us more than I
because there are a lot of
guys now; even women who don't
have to be that dolly-bird image of
variation on it.

Vi: The other thing about your question
about how it works with the group being
sexually mixed. The age is inseparable
from that, really. Because as a woman
you're welcome if you're glamorous
as long as she knows her place etc.,
But I am 42 and the band has shared
these risks with me equally. They have
not demanded that I change. I often
said all we were getting was abuse, well
like all we were getting was a young pretty girl
maybe we should get a young pretty girl
on the front. You do cave-in sometimes

Syd: wouldn't that apply just as much to a male band? That they had to please the audience by taking on a male role?

Vi: It's an element of prostitution that has always been through show business. I felt that very poignantly. I got to a point in my life where there are all these roles, the goddess, the mother, the tart, and you can't avoid them all the way down the line. I feel confused about it. It's something to do with show business and do we want to entertain or do we want to please? Well, yes, I do want to. I use my voice sometimes deliberately seductively. But there's always the danger that if you go on that you fall over a cliff some-where into losing your vitality and touch with what you really want and the reality which is that I'm getting older. I feel as much in touch with that as with my ability to be seductive. On this record my voice is used in a very hard way. I don't get into pleasing vocals. A part of me thinks: 'Oh, gee, I should have used my voice, I can seduce with my voice, I can give people a lot to get off on'. But if I do, I'm just

Vi: The money side of it is fucked up. When we do a benefit or we play a commercial gig - who's actually getting the money? If you want to make money, you've got to be really clever and really big before you make a living out of it. The other alternative being to be a hard working pub-band.

Syd: How does your band feel about making money? Are you trying to integrate making a living with using music as a means of self-expression?

Vi: I'm on Social Security, so is Richard. Bernie works as a freelance graphic artist finding that increasingly difficult to combine with his commitment to the band. Lawrence is redundant - was teaching. I'm on S.S. until my kids are sixteen, - another 18 months unless they stay on at school.

Connie: How do you afford to keep going? Vi: we have lots of problems. We need a better P.A., our van keeps breaking down. If you hire a van, you certainly lose money you can't do the sort of thing we're doing wholeheartedly for long and try to make money by side activities. There's something completely wrong with the economic side of it all. The club gets the money, it's the people who own the venues, the equipment, the people who



but the men in the band have been quite clear and given me a lot of strength. It's quite difficult for men who want conformity, the status quo whatever. How do they make a stand? They're in a double bind, because we can say: look there's a difference.

She here makes a point with a particular band as an example. even though this is sincere about wanting to make a critical statement about the world, and yet, they're stuck in the contradiction, to do that powerfully they have to act like powerful men - the big daddy, like the leadership thing.

For men to give something to me in that situation to say 'right on, go ahead!' is their way of making their stand. That's important and I wouldn't still be doing it, had it not been for the fact that the men in our group were as clear, if not clearer.

Syd: what sort of reaction did you get from the audience, you mentioned that you got flack from the audience?

Vi: when we first started I tried all different ways of being - like different costumes. I used to get into a real mess. Once or twice I wore clothes that were glamorous but almost a clown's version of it. I found I got misinterpreted. Some people would really like that. The first song in our set goes: 'I don't want to be like my mother, fall behind, wait on all the others, now I feel just like my mother, her price is low, she doesn't bother.' Sometimes I think its the only way we get by. You do things to please an audience. But what you're doing by as is giving them the power to reject you as well. An audience personifies the male yes or no we like you or we don't - we'll give you something or we won't. That's the tart side of being a woman.

falling away from reality of it which is our belief in ourselves, our right to be shouldn't depend on our ability to seduce. Moreover, that's got something to do with being clean and clear and having something to contribute to the world. Every entertainer and performer has to sort out which side of that line they're going to come down on most times. People tell me record companies might come along sometime and they'll try to polish us or smooth us off. People have told me my voice is like Carina Kitt's or with Pia's sometimes. They may want to promote that side of it. That's fine, but if it's going to be at the expense of the real energy that we're about, that's not what we want. Like, any guitarist does that really mean? You're denying every body else who isn't Jimi Hendrix and you're denying the possibility of change. And if there's anything we all want most of all, it's change. Also, I don't want my two kids to feel that the only way they can make it is to be like somebody else or to seduce people into some kind of forgetfulness of what's really going on.

Syd: what's the money-side like?

can afford to invest in a P.A., the people who can afford the recording studio equipment. They are the people who are making the money out of it. The guy that off plus the production costs of making a record, might make a hundred and with that we can afford to start again. The people who lent us the money will say: 'O.K. do another one', but to get to the point of making it. The well, I've been told not to hold out any hopes. Some people do manage it. The whole structure of it are one or two stars, one or two big bands and there are the canmots to have a perspective about that and realise in no way could it be a living out of it. Most of us have got to go down so that the stars can exist. The Buzzcocks who were in touch with us have done a lot of hard work, made albums, singles, but won't make a proper living unless they get something at No. 1 in the charts. The

Punks I think realised that and aren't aiming in the same way. But there's a contradiction in that, the more outrageous (Sex Pistols) do in fact make it. What I want is to be able to afford more recording time because I think that's a good way of getting your ideas through. I also want us to be able to play in a big hall if no-one can hear you. It's an insult to the audience to play so they can't understand the words. I feel very strongly about that so I like a really good P.A. But you've got to have the money to hire or buy them.

Connie: Do you find it difficult to get on with other bands?

Vi: I find it difficult to talk to bands. We meet in really shitty situations. We meet in really shitty situations. The hassles, there's nearly always somebody who doesn't want to play. First. It's so competitive, it's not a good situation for getting to know people. People pay lip service to anti-sexists, but it's still fundamentally there. People are still scared of women who have got to say something about the way things are being done. This again makes it difficult for me to talk to other bands, because most of them are male and very young. I'm sure they've all got hang ups with girlfriends of their own ages, let alone trying to talk to a woman like me who's old enough to be their mother.

Connie: What's the reaction of the audience to you like?

Vi: In the beginning the audience reaction was: (here she drops her mouth and stares) - disbelief, flabbergast, 'what the hell, what's going on here?' when you get that it feeds your own paranoia and scariness about doing it. Now, that some audiences are getting used to us, they accept more the fact that we're there. I don't think I'm being big-headed to say that because of who we are, as well as what we're saying, we are right at the tip of a change process in music at the moment. Two or three of our songs are basic rock and roll formula music and yet we're singing about things like Electro-therapy for women, kids getting you down because of stress and strains of family life from a domestic point of view, from said we were working on the theme of

domestic violence and how that connects to international violence. That's important, and rock and roll has never been used like that ever. Rock and roll has been used to express sexist trips and sexist fantasies. 'Let me rock you baby and I'll rock all your troubles away' what a fuckin' insult that is ya know. I think we're doing something quite different - taking over rock and roll

which is traditionally sexist music and using that basic form to express something completely in opposition to that.

Syd: Do you think you're isolated in this?

Vi: Ah, I have to believe we're not isolated. If I thought we were the only ones I'd be frightened. So I have to believe there's a consciousness we're part of, that gives me the strength to do it, I'm not a martyr.

Syd: I liked your lyrics because they seemed explicit and to arise from your own experience of what it's like to be trapped in the home and things like that.

Vi: They all arise from our experience totally. I haven't personally had E.C.T. (electro-shock therapy), I've refused to know what goes on, I know the statistics, the number of women on pills or in mental hospitals. But for a lot of support in my personal life I would have gone, or could have gone, easily that way.

Syd: Do you when making your lyrics or singing think about who makes up your audience?

Vi: Oh, that's a difficult one. To sing about the stuff I sing about to a predominantly male teenage audience is scary. We've played at events organized by women and there's a difference of consciousness. At the same time, that's easy. I like it, I need it but it's why I take it out of that context. Which is why in some ways the important thing to do is I don't want to play in an all women band, which is right in the middle of the sexist world. But I want you to realize I said I need that; I need the support of women, to know there will be a shared consciousness, where there are places where we can play where the applause at the end will be something we all own, not just the band being clever. But I don't want to just do that, that would be an avoidance.

Connie: Do you organize with the others, what are your problems?

Vi: The biggest difficulty I had was the decision to play an instrument. To be a singer was sort of easy. The image thing again, the big fat mamma tradition. The decision to play an instrument was harder. I wore it like a kind of burden, I didn't care to make a proper noise, I turned down, I played quietly. Then I realised that was worse, in a way, than not doing anything at all. After six months of doing that, we had a big talk in the band. Am I going to go on like this? Or should we decide we should go on with me attempting to play. This was a turning point, where I realized if I was going to do it I had to put everything into it as much as into my singing. I had to turn up

play louder, get myself a bigger amp, you've got to really hit it. I began to take a more active part in deciding what I should play, because in the beginning Bernie was telling me what to play 'cause I had to learn, now I work out my own guitar parts. It's no longer an ornament or a burden. I've got a long way to go. But that was the hardest bit, coming to terms with electric loud music.

Syd: How did you come into being an electric hard music band then?

Vi: Oh, we played acoustic music in the body show. It was another one of these turning points. I think it's to do with assertion, the need to say what you're saying really powerfully. Realizing that other people were out there going bang-bang crash-crash and they got attention and respect. I had a whole load of fears about that, because that was macho, you know, no good. But then it's also real, it's happening. The kind of struggle that I think we're into can't be done with little bells and

delicate noises on its own. The hippie thing was beautiful, female conscious, but it became part of the establishment, it didn't confront the establishment properly. That sort of consideration made us go into it the way we did, get the equipment. The hippie culture was colonized, the punk culture can't be so easily colonized.

Syd: why do you think that?

Vi: For me punk came to life when my son adopted it, that made me realize that was his way of saying "I'm here". The punk culture is saying "we're here". They don't always know why they're doing with it when you are here. Really basic expression of existence. That's ultimately more of a threat to the establishment, individuals saying strongly "I'm here, I'm going to make a noise", then comes the responsibility for what sort of noise you make. That's why I think lyrics are important and why I want the lyrics to be heard.

Connie: Have you had any interviews yet, with the music papers?

Vi: Not yet really. We had a full page spread in the Sunday People a couple of years ago. It was so patronizing. The whole approach was.... 'A Mother is a Punk' we were offered a double page spread in the Sunday Mirror recently and turned it down. The journalist we were in touch with said no way can we let you say what you want to say. Our offer is only for us to do the story our way. So we said No thanks.

Syd: Did they offer you quite a bit of money to do it?

Vi: No. They think the publicity they give us is a big favour.

Vi here describes a bad review of the band by a music journalist. I've been able to find a quote from this review where he describes Vi as "a plump, middle-aged lady squeezed into a crimson skirt."

Vi: I hunted him down and hit him around the face. I thought N.M.S. would never deal with us again 'cause I'd hit one of their reporters. But then he gave us a good review, he must have realized..... something - anyhow, that's what you're up against, that they judge you on the fact you shouldn't be there because you're not the right image. An executive of a record company said on meeting the band, 'Oh no, not a housewife trying to get in on the act.'

Syd: That's age and looking down on housewives together isn't it? Which is one, you're not the 'right' age, which you've got to be for the punk groups, they've even got ads in the music papers saying they want someone not over twenty, as if if you're older than that you're over the hill. On top of that, its the housewife thing, people can't say the word 'housewife without sneering.

Vi: I don't want to stay young. I'm really glad I've lived as long as I have. The crunch is I want to stay alive, not become a hollow shell, like so many of the women of my age, I'd want to say 'where are you? where have you gone?'

Syd: You want to be able to change?

Vi: That's right and keep alive. I can do that by keeping in touch with myself but also by keeping in touch with everyone else who exhibits that kind of energy. And sure we're gonna have to fight, hassle it out between us, we're gonna have to get respect going all ways. But the issue is, I think, if we can stay alive on the individual level and continue to communicate as live people, we might be able to do something about not becoming robots or gunfodder or just picked on or organized out of existence. Keep ourselves and our ability to say yes or no when we mean it. And that's really true for women and I think really important for women.

old tarts song

if i had my time again i'd like to come back as a man

if i had my time again a cock and not a hen

i don;t want to be like my mother

hang behind and fall behind and wait on all the others

if i had my time again

if i had another life i'd get myself a wife

if i had another life to care for me by day and night

she would be just like my mother

hang behind and fall behind and wait on all the others

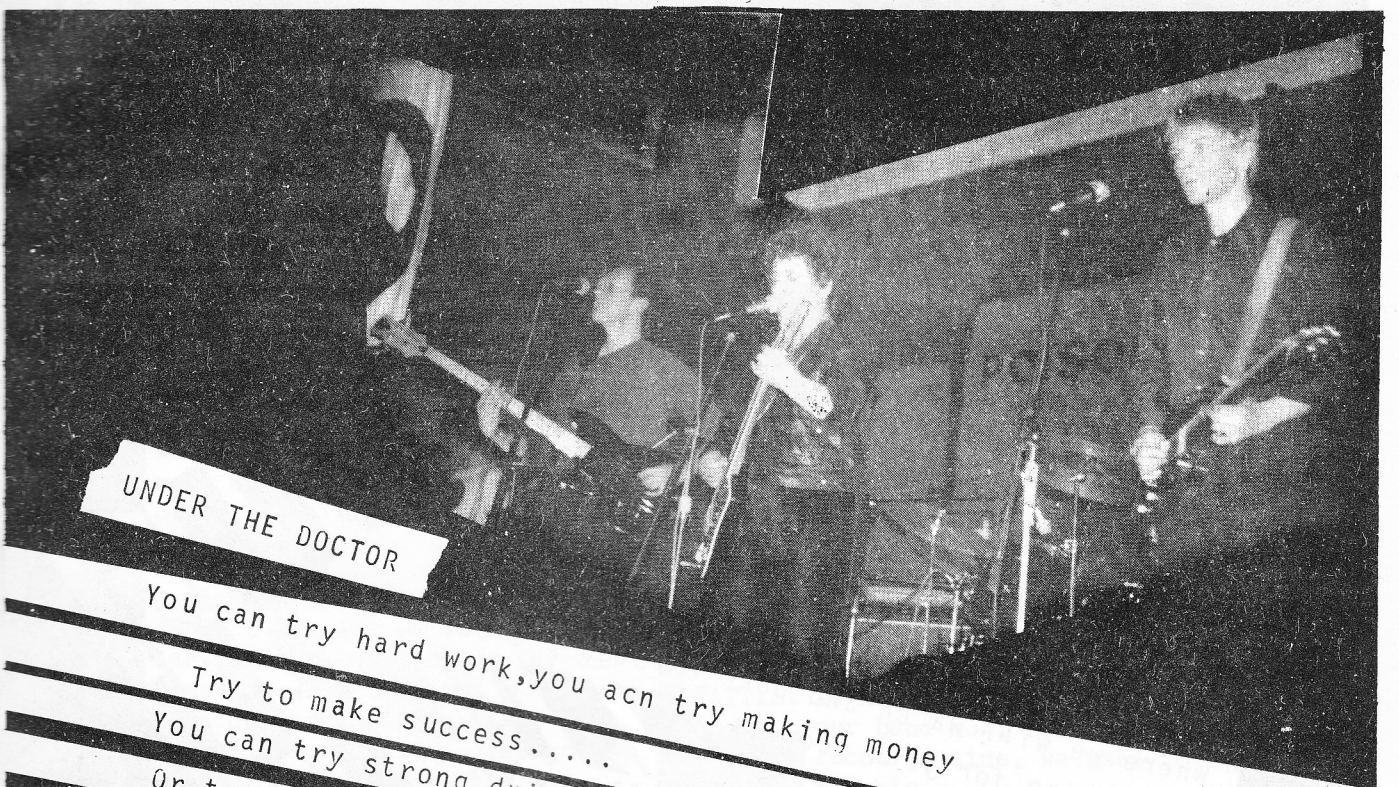
if i had another life

i used to be a tart i sold myself as art

now i feel just like my mother

her price is low -she doesn't bother.....

everybody has their price... UP YOURS.....



UNDER THE DOCTOR

You can try hard work, you acn try making money
Try to make success.....

You can try strong drink or take to acting funny
Or try some liberated sex.....

Try overeating, get anew job, have another baby.....
Maybe your an artist, or you could lead a revolution

Take up yoga, or just go crazy.....
Trancendental meditation, try anew diet, make some contacts

Go to discos, start again.....
Try religion, write a novel, buy some make-up, take up jogging
Or just blame it on the men.....

What i'm trying to say is you gotta be strong

Nothing takes the pain away for long

I....I ...I don't ...I don't to...don't want to go....

don't want to go under...don't want to go under....under
under, under, under, ...don't want to go under the doctor

And when it gets real heavy, if you start getting stropky

They'll deal you out some mighty fine dope.....

Librium.....Mogadon.....Thorazine....Valium....

But they haven't got a pill called hope

And thousands of us women have been cut down by lobotomy

Terrr Terrorised by ECT

Bullied into passivity, seduced by servility,

I'm talking about you and me.....

What i'm trying to say is you gotta be strong

Cos nothing takes the pain away for long.

LIVE

RECORDED OR LIVE

Recognising reasons for your failure
I remain aloof i can criticize
Coolly collected and wonderfully wise
Yes i've been deceived by many lies

CHORUS

I am the audience
That puts performers to the test

I am the media
For whom the t.v. screen is best
Standing staring sneering at the clowns
Who try to please me singing on a stage
Please us and w'e'll lock you in a cage
Where we will watch and poke through the bars
Searching for your secrets
W Laughing at your scars
Believe almost anything we tell you but the
truth

Persil washes shirts clean and bright
Watch the small square t.v. screen

All through the night
You are the mass who ask for god
A picture of your idol will hang on your wall

And you are the paricital media
Think before you fall.
Pattie Maria Owens



Liggers

CONNIE: How did you get to know each other ?

PATTIE: We all went to school together.

DONNA : None of us were in the same class except for the 4th year, we all got split up because we were bad influences on each other.

PATTIE: What happened was we were at Band on the wall one night and David asked me if I'd like to sing 'O Bondage Up Yours' the last number, one of our favourites. So we wrote down the words dead quick, sort of learnt them. Me, Gillian and Gina just got up on the stage and were screechin' it out, it was absolutely horrible, but the audience loved it ! we started to do a few numbers with the Mekon*. Gillian dropped out by now, just me and Gina at first. We did some awful gigs like at Feilden Park, where nobody clapped.

JANE : I just stood in the middle of that bloody dance floor going like (imitations of jiving to the music). Nobody else is out there and everybody's looking at me trying to dance, going "She's with THOSE on stage." Me sliding down in my chair - 'I don't know them - honest!' So embarrassing.

PATTIE: It was so awful. Then after that Donna decided she wanted to join us!

DONNA : Yes I know and you've never looked back since.

PATTIE: we sang along with the Mekon for awhile. we called ourselves a seperate band then 'The

Liggers' with the Mekon backing us. Then we got offered a record single. There was loads of hassle with the Mekon about that. The guy who was paying for the record, Dave Bentley, suggested we try the Non-sensibles. But they already had a lead singer. We tried one rehearsal with them but figured they were too much into their own music, which is understandable, to be a backing band for us. I don't blame them. Which is why getting our own backing band like we have now is such a good thing because they do what we want them to do, whereas before we had to ask them 'could we please do this'. Two seperate bands on stage together doesn't work, you each want to go your own seperate way

DONNA:

PATTIE: We knew Andy Zero, the drummer in our band now, because he sold the local fanzine, we used to buy it off him.

DONNA: Andy Zero took complete charge then. Said 'I've got the backing band'. It was no hassle. we had a complete backing band without having to advertize.

SYD: Do you mean by a backing band that you do the lyrics and music ?

DONNA: Thats putting them down below, put that way.

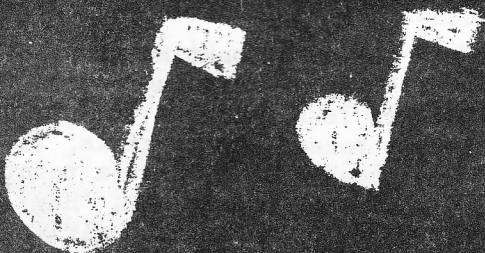
PATTIE: They write the music and we write the lyrics.

DONNA: They made up about two tunes and we fit lyrics to the tune. But they've run out of tunes now so they'd like us to give them a hint of what sort of melody we're after. It's good. I can't write lyrics unless I have a tune in my mind of how I want it to go. I hummed the tune of 'Thats Life' to S , our lead guitarist, can you do anything like that ? and he got it straight off, thats what I call a good guitarist. He knew what I wanted.

CONNIE: What about the management side ?

DONNA: we do it ourselves. We're not big enough to need anybody to take care of our affairs. The places where we play are local, we know someone who knows the manager, we leave it to them.

PATTIE: Andy, through producing the fanzine, knows the management side and can help us get gigs.



We would like a manager, a rich one!

DONNA: Somebody who's prepared to put something into us, whos got faith.

PATTIE: Thats all we need really.

CONNIE: How long have you been singing for

PATTIE: About six months.

DONNA: We've only had about one gig a month though.

CONNIE: Would you like to play an instrument ?

DONNA: Yes.

PATTIE: Shes been trying to teach herself the sax. We'd like a bit of sax.

DONNA: Its a question of money, I can't really afford one. Also I don't think I'm good enough to go on stage.

PATTIE: we wouldn't mind having a key-boards as well, and a synthesizer. A question of money.

DONNA: We have all these airs and graces We just need the money.

SYD: Are you living at home ?

PATTIE: Yeah, we all do.

CONNIE: Do you get on with your parents?

DONNA: I get on better with my mum now than I have for ages. We don't get on really well. Just keep ourselves to ourselves. which I prefer. I'd like to get my own flat but its a question of money.

PATTIE: I get on with my mum O.K. She's. O.k. I don't rebel as much as I used to 'cause I've not got anything to rebel against.

DONNA: I used to take the band as a hobby but more and more its taking me over, I really want us to do well. Its more than just a hobby, not an obsession, but more than just a hobby. we put a lot of time into it, compared to the amount of time on stage. The audience doesn't realize how much time a band does put into the work, whether they be good or bad

PATTIE: If anything goes wrong people think 'Tut-tut - shabby' They don't realize you've rehearsed it alot, that you're nervous.

DONNA: I always thought bands were confident when they got on stage. When we tried it we were just physical wrecks. After you've been on, you feel elated that you've gone through it, the tensions over, you feel good.

PATTIE: It takes guts. At first, I'd go on stage with the lyrics trembling in one hand, I tried to sneak down into my coat. I wouldn't dance, just stand there

shaking.

DONNA: Last night was the first night she danced. Never again!

CONNIE: How often do you rehearse ?

DONNA: Not as often as we'd like.

PATTIE: We find it difficult to find a place to rehearse.

CONNIE: Why do you make music, do you have something to say ?

DONNA: If you listen to our lyrics, some of them are trying to get a point across.

PATTIE: Most are statements as well, Doris Day is a statement releasing frustration about her, you get hatred out through the song.

GINA: If you enjoy the music, the lyrics are perhaps secondary. Every song you do changes as you do it. We want to keep spontaneous and lively. You've got all the fun but not so much responsibility of you're the singers.

SYD: Would you like to play an instrument, Gina ?

GINA: Yeah, I can play the bass a bit. Idealistically.....I'd like to play a reggae-type bass. A dub sound. Drawn out and pounding. The bass I've got is not very good and I've only got a small amp.

CONNIE: How do you feel on stage as three singers ?

GINA: Comfortable. If one of you falters the others can carry on. You have a laugh as well. I think its funny all these people paying money to see us, They can see us in Didsbury!

CONNIE: How do you get on with your parents ?

GINA: Quite well. My mums really for the band, shes great. She was going to come and see me singing but she'd feel out of it. She could borrow my drains - but shes too fat! we get a lot of support from our school friends as well. Remember that gig at Southport ?

DONNA: Yeah all the punky-poops of Southport were there, jumping around. They tried to kiss Gina.

DONNA)
PATTIE) Which we weren't bothered about!

DONNA: The men do letch sometimes but they don't shout anything obscene.

GINA: People are less inclined to take us seriously because we're girls. Its a shame because we do have a point behind our songs. They say, 'Hey girls! - Lets get into the girls side of it' Three girls a great

novelty etc., It demeans us a bit.

DONNA : It has its advantages though. If we were just a boys group, well, all male bands are more or less the same to look at. Three girls and a backing band of males looks quite good.

GINA : More girls should get in the music business than are. They're just as capable as blokes if not better.

PATTIE: We've got a position of authority in our band. We share in decisions.

GINA : Lets see if shes a good looking person, lets see if shes got a nice body, lets see what she sounds like. It might be in that order but at least it gets them to listen. In our songs we try to put ourselves on an equal footing with the audience. We are playing for them. We have an unwritten contract with them to make sure they enjoy themselves, thats what we're there for.

PATTIE: We can't have the attitude of superstars on stage. We're just too naive about it.

DONNA : Too nervous.. We're always amazed when people come up and say they enjoyed themselves enjoyed us, it really makes us happy when they do that. All this shit about bands not giving autographs. It's terrible.....you owe people who come and pay to.....

GINA : I disagree with that. You're setting yourself up to be in a high position. I'd rather just talk to them anyway, so we have a good talk, not just sign autographs.

PATTIE: But its hard to talk to them, you don't know them, you're embarrassed. You're feeling nervous.

GINA : But that's it. You have this mutual bond though Pattie, i.e. your music, their interest in it. Its ego-boosting to talk about your self and your music. Great we're not making enemies.

CONNIE: Is there anything you'd like to change in your band ?

PATTIE: I'd like a more weird sound to our band. More experimental.

GINA : I agree.

PATTIE: Using things like echo units to make the sound more disturbing than it is. Right now its sort of pleasant and normal on the ear.

DONNA : But we can't get too adventurous too soon.

GINA : To swap and change until we get what we want. You can change, thats the whole point of being in a group, not to stagnate. Not to

ruin your sound by making it too professional and tight, which I think Elvis Costello did. We've got a raw edge to our sound which I think is quite appealing.

DONNA : Thats a good thing for the audience as well - if something goes wrong, they like laughing at people's embarrassments. You're fallible to that which makes you more endearing to the audience than spic-span groups who go on wham-bam-thank-you ma'm, when you don't feel anything for them.

SYD : Alot of audiences want something they don't have to put any effort of themselves into, don't they ?

GINA : Oh yeah, I agree. Which is perhaps why we do appeal, we're not that outrageous yet, we're not anti-anything too much. Are we at the moment ?

PATTIE: No.

GINA : But we will start doing that - so watch out world!!

CONNIE: How do you see yourselves going on?

DONNA : We'd like it to be long term. We'd like to get a large following and be recognised.

GINA : Just be recognised, right? For our musical talents etc., I think we're talented.

"HEAR, HEAR." GO ALL THE LIGGERS.

We're just playing for now. We take every gig as another rehearsal where we improve ourselves. Carry on growing and growing. You should never stop, when you get too tight you should dissolve all that away and start doing something else, if you've got it. Or theres no adventure. Its good fun. Good experience for life. When you get into the recording business and see all the shit there is about money its amazing. we don't want to be ripped off but then again we don't want to be too shrewd and clever.

